

REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1, 3-6, 8-11, 13-15, 17, and 18 are pending, in which claims 12 and 16 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 11, 13-15, 17, and 18 are currently amended. No new matter is introduced.

The Office Action mailed July 31, 2003 rejected claims 11-13, and 15-17 as obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on *Shah et al.* (US 5,646,936) in view of *Brady* (US 6,041,049), and claims 14 and 18 as obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on *Shah et al.* in view of *Brady* and in further view of *Fischer* (US 4,941,089).

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 1, 3-6, and 8-10 are allowed.

To advance prosecution, Applicants have incorporated the allowable features with respect to independent claims 1 and 6 into claims 11 and 15. Namely, amended independent claims 11 and 15 recite “wherein the nodes exchange keep alive messages over the respective spare links to convey the identification information.” Accordingly, the obviousness rejections are moot.

Applicants wish to bring to the Examiner’s attention to related co-pending application 09/365,081. An Information Disclosure Statement including prior art cited in connection with this co-pending application is being filed herewith.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration is respectfully requested. If any unresolved issues remain, Applicants request that the Examiner contact the undersigned attorney at (202)736-6652 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

Worldcom, Inc., dba MCI

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Date



Michael A. Wrehn  
Attorney for Applicant(s)  
Reg. No. 42,237

Law & Public Policy  
Worldcom, Inc., dba MCI  
1133 19th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036